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ENGLISH

Virtues and Fundamental values

A case study on how to teach the fundamental values using
New Spring

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Abstract: Moral education through the work of literature and story-telling has long been present in our society. With the curriculum this moral education is something that should be present in today's education as well. By studying the fundamental values in the curriculum and how they are expressed in the fantasy novel *New Spring*, the moral values will be present in education. Using literature in the classroom has many benefits and by specifically using fantasy we might catch the interest from the students. By using *New Spring* as a case study I will do a lesson plan that incorporates the fundamental values in education.

Keywords: moral education, moral values, ethics, fantasy, fundamental values, curriculum, virtue ethics, literature, English 6, Robert Jordan, *New Spring*, *The Wheel of Time*, Tricia Hedge

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Thesis Proposal and Aim	2
1.2	Method.....	2
1.3	The Curriculum.....	2
1.4	Key Concepts.....	4
1.4.1	Moral values	4
1.4.2	Normative ethics	4
1.4.3	Virtue Ethics.....	4
1.5	Research Overview	6
1.5.1	Why Use Literature in the Classroom?	6
1.5.2	Why fantasy Literature?	8
1.5.3	Why Moral Education in School?	10
2.	New Spring in the Classroom.....	13
2.1	Pre-reading activities	13
2.1.1	Definitions of virtues and the fundamental values.....	14
2.2	While-reading activities.....	16
2.3	Post-reading activities.....	17
2.3.1	Portrayals of the moral values	18
2.3.2	Characterisation.....	23
2.3.3	Moral justification	23
3.	Conclusions	25
	Bibliography.....	26
	Appendix 1	28



1. Introduction

The Wheel of Time turns, and ages come and pass. What was, what will be and what is, may yet fall under the shadow. (Jordan, backcover)

Through the ages norms and moral values have been portrayed in literature and story-telling. Some stories revolve around a moral lesson, while others have a more discrete moral message. Many of us read fables when we were young, and moral education starts with stories like these in early childhood. How we ought to behave and what is considered right and wrong in our society are essential to learn early on in order to fit in and to keep society in order. In school, we have the curriculum to tell us what should be a part of education when it comes to moral values. It is also a common understanding that the school has a responsibility to educate the students, which puts a focus on the school to bring in a discussion about moral values in everyday teaching. This also means that teachers need to have knowledge about moral values and the complexity of the theories that concern ethics. It is important to incorporate the curriculum in education in order to make the moral values in it a natural part of school and to help the students bring these values with them into society.

Meanwhile, to make moral education more interesting and suitable for the older students, other sources of literature than the fables need to be used. This is not only for make it more interesting, but also to teach students that they can find these moral values in the literature that they usually read. Therefore, this essay will deal with the moral values found in the curriculum and incorporate them in English using literature, using the fantasy novel *New Spring* as a case study.

A short synopsis of the chosen novel, *New Spring*, is relevant. The two main characters, which the novel centres around, are Moiraine Damodred and Al'Lan Mandragoran. Lan is a soldier from the Borderlands, the last king of the lost kingdom of Malkier. He has just fought a war in the south and is travelling back north again during in the story. Moiraine is an Accepted of the White Tower, but is soon raised to Aes Sedai. She witnesses a Foretelling proclaiming the coming of the Dragon Reborn. Moiraine makes it her personal mission to find him and to help him save the world from the Dark One. Moiraine and Lan cross paths eventually, a meeting which is not without friction. Before he becomes her Warder in the end, their different cultural backgrounds are grounds for some issues between them. Moiraine and

Lan encounter Darkfriends and Black sisters, people and Aes Sedai that have turned to the Dark One, along the way, and the *Wheel of Times*-series can begin. Since the vocabulary of the novel can be a challenge, I have added a glossary in the appendices (Appendix 1).

1.1 Thesis Proposal and Aim

The claim of this essay is that you can use fantasy literature to teach students in English 6, Upper Secondary School, about moral values and especially the fundamental values that can be found in the curriculum. The term “fundamental values” refers to certain values the school should build upon, and is The Swedish National Agency for Education’s, sv. Skolverket, translation of the Swedish word ‘värdegrund’ (Skolverket, *Curriculum* 4). The aim of the essay is to use fantasy literature in school and to bring fundamental values into the education with the help of *New Spring*, a fantasy novel by Robert Jordan. The reason I will use this particular book is because it is a good fantasy story, and both the language and the amount of text are suitable for this level. In *New Spring* most of the fundamental values can be found as different traits of the characters and the struggle between good and evil highlights different ethical issues. *New Spring* is a fantasy novel with a heroine and a hero, a good contrast to some of the other popular fantasy novels that only have a male as the main character and hero, an equality issue. Some examples of this are *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Eragon*, and *The Belgariad*. I also believe that the students can relate to Moiraine and her situation as a student in the White Tower, even though she is slightly older.

1.2 Method

The method that will be used for this essay is a literary analysis based on moral values, and virtues from the curriculum. I will also discuss the pedagogical use of literature in the classroom, as well as a discussion about teaching moral values. By using *New Spring* as a case study I will examine how it can be used in education and give examples of this. These different discussions, in the sections that follow, will serve as a guide for the analysis and how the book can be used in the classroom. The essay will study how desirable behaviour and moral values are portrayed in the novel, and how can we use it in the classroom. The moral values will be presented in the section that discusses the curriculum.

1.3 The Curriculum

The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all

people, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people are the values that the education should represent and impart. In accordance with the ethics borne by Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is to be achieved by nurturing in the individual a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility. Teaching should be non-denominational. (Skolverket, *Curriculum*, 4)

These are the fundamental values that “the education should represent and impart” (Skolverket, *Curriculum* 4). In order to keep the analysis within the frames of the essay I will look more closely at some specific values from the curriculum that are mentioned in the quote above. These values are justice, generosity, tolerance, responsibility, solidarity and empathy. Other fundamental values that are important in the curriculum are democratic values, equality between women and men, and the equal value of all people, and will also be included in the analysis of the novel. It is also important to educate the students in critical thinking (4).

These values are important ones to teach the students and in my opinion, they are important virtues for society to live by as well. But the curriculum does not say how teachers should implement them in teaching and the freedom to interpret can be a challenge for many teachers because they do not know how to do this. If we look at the syllabus for English 6 for help, it only states that the education should cover ethical issues (Skolverket, *Syllabus* 7).

Since fantasy is all about good and bad should the curriculum and education also bring up behaviour that should be avoided? I do not have the answer to this, because it can be problematic to talk about how you should not behave. But it can also be a help to talk about opposites. However, from a different perspective, it can also be problematic to talk about virtues in school as well. Should the school dictate how persons should be? Considering the debate about school and its responsibility to raise the students as responsible adults, the answer may be yes. Although, when it comes to encouraging certain behaviour there is a fine line between education and indoctrination. I want the students to think for themselves and understand why some traits are considered virtues and others vices. I want them to think critically. This becomes an ethical question; can you “impart” moral values and at the same time encourage the students to think critically, or is the contradiction too large? This is not something an individual can decide, but should be discussed between teachers and between teachers and students, maybe even with politicians, who are the ones that decide about the curriculum.

1.4 Key Concepts

This essay will operate around the concept of moral values and the norms that concern behaviour. There are many ways to look at ethics and morality, what drives us to do good things and which actions we consider to be morally good. First we will define the different values, and then we will look at what the dictionary says about morals, and we will also look closer at what theories that moral philosophers have presented to go deeper into the subject (than the general definition).

1.4.1 Moral values

The definition of *Moral*, from Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, is "of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior", whereas *Morality* is the discourse ("Moral", "Morality"). Julia Driver, a philosopher, defines moral norms, in her book *Ethics – The Fundamentals*, as concerning "our interactions with others in ways that have significance for their well-being", what we "ought" to do (1). But what is right and wrong, good and bad is defined by cultures and individual beliefs (2, 14) and is something that differs over time and geography (15).

In addition to the general definition we have moral philosophy and several theories about moral values. The theories provide something more to include in the analysis than just a brief and general definition from the dictionary, but the theories are also something to discuss here and to analyse in relation to which approach will serve the aim of the essay best.

1.4.2 Normative ethics

When it comes to moral philosophy the general theory is called normative ethics. Normative ethics is about "how we ought to act" but "normative ethics is also distinct from the law, just because a procedure or outcome is legal does not make it morally good" (Driver 4). Social norms set down the rules for our everyday life. But norms can come from different aspects of our society, political views, ideology and other social commitments can affect our moral values, and therefore normative ethics can be divided into different types. In this essay we will look closer on Virtue Ethics. (Stewart 11).

1.4.3 Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics developed as an alternative to other moral theories in the 1950s, even though it was inspired by Aristotle's ideas about ethics (Stewart 54). The focus is not on the actions but on the person behind the actions, the agent. This theory is based on people wanting to be

virtuous and that “the virtues are the *means* and the *end*” (Stewart 58). Aristotle claimed that if you act morally you could acquire the virtues that help you live a satisfying life. The virtues in focus according to Aristotle are courage, temperance, justice and wisdom (Stewart 62). Modern philosophers add virtues like professionalism, industriousness, love, empathy, commitment, to fit today’s society. Being morally good makes you live up to certain virtues, while morally bad persons have vices. It is interesting that vices are virtues in excess or deficiency (Stewart 74). These virtues are more concrete than the principles of other theories that are more abstract (Driver 136).

The reasons for using virtue ethics as the main theory are that it is a concrete theory where the virtues match several of the fundamental values in the curriculum and these values are something concrete to base both the analysis and education on. Another reason for using virtue ethics is that one could argue that the curriculum itself is based on virtue ethics. The curriculum expresses certain values that the school should be built upon and much like virtue ethics the focus is on the individual, not the actions themselves. This leads us to conclude that the curriculum is virtue-based and that virtue ethics is the best theory to explain moral values in the curriculum. In order for *New Spring* to be useful to teach ethics in accordance to the curriculum I will need to use virtue ethics to study the values in the novel. It will also become natural to discuss moral justification and cultural relativism in relation to the virtues in the analysis, since virtues may vary among different cultures and the justification for our actions is an important function of our psyche.

Other concepts related to moral values that will be discussed in this essay and in the classroom, that are not connected to a certain moral theory, are moral justification and cultural relativism. These two concepts will bring a depth to the analysis of the characters and how fundamental values function in the novel.

According to Driver moral justification is when we want to justify our actions morally, and do so frequently but “mere individual belief about what is right and wrong cannot morally justify someone’s actions” (14). Even if we try to justify our actions, it does not make them morally right according to society. The collective decides. It is of psychological importance to justify our actions morally. We want to do the right thing by ourselves.

Another important aspect to moral values is that they are affected by the culture in which they are active. This is called cultural relativism. According to cultural relativism “the rightness of an action is determined by what people in a given culture, by and large, believe”.

Driver also calls attention to the difference in morality and good manners that exist in most cultures. The difference that exists between cultures means that there are no universal moral values or moral truths as Driver calls them (16). This is an important aspect considering that the essay will, in a way, compare different cultures' moral values. But the issues of the comparison will be highlighted in the analysis. When comparing our culture to the ones in the novel, it is important to have cultural relativism in mind. Just as the different cultures in the novel will both share some moral values and have a different opinion on what is right and wrong. It is important to note that a culture is not a homogenous concept and there are differences within a culture, and that a culture changes overtime. Meanwhile, Driver shows that you can make some general assumptions about the moral values within a culture.

1.5 Research Overview

1.5.1 Why Use Literature in the Classroom?

Much research has been done about using literature in the language classroom and about analysing literature. What arguments are there for and against using literature in the classroom?

One reason to use literature in the language classroom is because it is included in the syllabus for English 6 (the target group of this essay). The use of literature is part of the core content of the course. "Contemporary and older literature, poetry, drama and songs" should be covered in the education (Skolverket, *Syllabus*, 7). This gives the teacher a broad opportunity to use different kinds of literary works in the classroom. In the classroom the "themes, ideas, form and content" of the chosen literature should be discussed, which leaves the teacher with the possibility to discuss moral values and issues. When it comes to *New Spring* it falls under the category of contemporary literature.

There are also many researchers who discuss the use of literature in the language classroom. Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater list several reasons in their book *Literature in the Language Classroom* (2011), why literature should be used in teaching. First, it is "valuable authentic material". It is something that is written for native speakers (and of course anyone who knows the language), and not for the purpose of teaching a foreign language. It is a way for students to get in contact with different modes of writing a text, "irony, exposition, argument, narration and so on" (3-4).

However, as Mohammad Khatib points out in his article, "Literature in Efl/Esl Classroom" (2011), there are some challenges that a student may encounter regarding authentic materials. Reading texts in a foreign language can provide syntactic and lexical difficulties, as well as difficulties with phonetics and semantics. Another linguistic challenge is that some literary concepts may be hard to grasp for the students. As a teacher you have to pick the right text for your students' level of familiarity with different genres and concepts. It is equally important to take language proficiency in consideration. Khatib emphasises the benefit literature can have on the language skills, the authenticity of literature and cultural awareness it brings (Khatib 202-204).

Another argument that Collie and Slater bring up is "cultural enrichment". Literature can be a way of understanding other cultures. Literature describes new environments and different customs than our own. But as cultural enrichment, literature is best as a complement to other material (4). Even though the cultures of *New Spring* are fictive, the students can still learn about how other cultures function. There is also enrichment in learning about other cultures' moral values and compare them to our own. A concept that has been mentioned earlier that will be a key aspect here is cultural relativism. Learning about other cultures' moral values is one way to understand the culture studied. In the case of fantasy this connection is not straightforward. But it can also be difficult to understand some moral beliefs that are very different from our own, which leads us to the challenge of cultural barriers. Even though students can learn a lot of new things about different cultures through literature, it can also be an obstacle. It can be difficult to understand cultural references from a culture you do not belong to (Khatib 205).

Another benefit of using literature in the language classroom is "language enrichment". The teacher can use literature to increase the students' vocabulary and add richness to the language. If the literature is handled advantageously in the classroom, students can profit linguistically from reading literature. But this puts higher demands on the text and requires more of the teacher for the text to be beneficial (Collie and Slater 4-5).

The last of Collie and Slater's reasons is "personal involvement". Good books draw the reader in, with eagerness to know what happens and with involvement with the characters and the empathic aspect of reading a novel. Students can be motivated by literature, which can lead to "beneficial effects upon the whole language process" (5-6). Khatib agrees about the personal involvement and emotional intelligence (EQ) aspect that literature can have and he

adds critical thinking. Reading can “foster emotional intelligence” and by reading and discussing the texts students develop their critical thinking and their empathy (203). Both empathy and critical thinking are important parts of the fundamental values that this essay focuses on and this shows that literature can be a good source for discussing these values.

Jonathan P.A. Sell also adds a new argument for literature, namely that it is easy to remember and will provide students with an “archive of linguistic use” (87). With the right work in the classroom the texts can also serve as an archive for moral values and good examples of our virtues. Maybe literature can serve as an archive for other things as well, for example gender issues and history.

Sell also throws light on another challenge of using literature in the language classroom. That is that the teacher becomes more dominant in the classroom when literature is used, an ethical issue concerning who has the power and what to do with it. The teacher has more knowledge so there is an imbalance in the communication of the knowledge in the classroom (Sell 87). This becomes an issue with the idea of the classroom being student centred. To counteract this, the teacher has to transfer her knowledge to the students, and still maintain the focus on them. The classroom activities can still be student centred, even if the teacher has more knowledge of the book.

Although there are many arguments against using literature in the classroom, the benefits outweigh them and by being aware of the issues you can counteract them. As a teacher you can help and support the students with the problems they might have with a text. The teacher can deal with the issues when planning the lessons. There will always be different challenges in the classroom that teachers have to face, and challenges are a great source of learning.

1.5.2 Why fantasy Literature?

Using fantasy in education is something that Robert Crossley has studied in his article “Education and Fantasy” (1975). It is relevant to answer the question why we should use fantasy in our education. One of the first things Crossley points out about fantasy is that it is not about the unknown, but about the familiar. Maybe this is why it is such a popular genre. It explores what is familiar to us but in the shape of the fantastic. He writes that through the eyes of fantasy we “clear our window” and get a new perspective on things well-known to us (285). It is a sort of “displacement of familiar human situations and psychology to an unfamiliar, exotic or bizarre setting”(285). This means that fantasy is as good a genre as any

other to be used for analysis in school. Most fantasy does not dwell on the marvellous, but focuses on the ordinary things which add richness to the story (286).

Crossley also states that the relation between fantasy and the familiar is what makes it an important genre to use in education. It brings another level of reflection and awareness to the reader to look at her own world with new knowledge. Crossley calls this gain of new knowledge and the reflection it brings the “principal effect of fantasy” (287).

Another important function of fantasy in education is that the reader is forced to use her imagination when reading fantasy and imagination is an important tool in school, in many subjects. With imagination one could easily sympathise with other people, feel empathy but also understand events outside one’s direct environment, imagination will widen the view of the reader (Crossley 288). It is when the reader, through the imagination, takes part in the work that she will learn from fantasy and learn from the delight it gives to be a part of this fantastic world (Crossley 292). It can also be of value that the student acquires an interest in fantasy as a genre and especially in literature. This can make education more fun and stimulating for the student and will lay the basis for life-long learning.

Crossley’s final statement about the relation between fantasy and education is that there are things “a student needs to learn through fantasy, through a personal voyage of self-discovery and self-definition” (292). The student needs to take this journey without the teacher, but that does not mean that the teacher is meaningless when it comes to using fantasy in education. The teacher brings order to these experiences of the student (293).

There are many other advantages and challenges to using the fantasy genre in education, besides the ones that Crossley mentions above. But no genre is perfect; it all depends on what you are going to use the novel for in the classroom.

There are also more advantages with using fantasy literature. One advantage is the escapism that comes naturally with fantasy. The escape to another world is a captivating idea (Crossley 293). Crossley calls it a “cheap thrill”, but we can “become practiced escapists” and learn from fantasy. Readers of fantasy enjoy the ability to escape our world and stay within the illusion of the fantastic (Crossley 283). But this escape has an ethical implication as well. If readers escape from this world, will they still be able to understand the moral values of our world? Or will it lead to a lack of engagement in the reader becoming distanced from our world?

There is also an advantage that the fantasy genre is popular now and it is good to use what is popular with the students in the classroom. Although it is popular now, it is also a genre that is, in a way, timeless. Heroes, epic tales and a fictive world have fascinated people for all time. Fantasy was big when Crossley wrote his article in 1975, and it is still popular. The timelessness also comes from the fact that fantasy often presents a feudal past that is familiar to us all. This also can prove to be a challenge. The feudal past had a stricter class division that is also present in the fantasy novel.

But we also need to look at the challenges. One of the challenges is that many fantasy novels create stereotypes of races and groups of people to simplify the new world the reader must take part in to understand the novels. This is a good basis for discussion in the classroom about how we see other people in our own world, because the simplification of races and cultures can even reinforce stereotypical views. This is one of the greater challenges when it comes to the fantasy genre and that equality is an important virtue in fundamental values. By looking at the stereotypes of the novel and then comparing them to the diversity in our world, students will see that stereotypes are just a simplification and that more lies beneath the surface.

Another challenge can be that a fantasy novel can be difficult to comprehend because the world is different from our own. If a student struggles with the text because of the genre, the teacher needs to be there for support. It might be good to do an assessment in advance to be prepared for things that might be a struggle. In this case I will have a glossary, a guide to the fantasy world and a plan for the text. It might be a challenge for the students to use their imagination in the way that fantasy requires, and we cannot leave the students adrift. Fantasy induces a contract between the novel and the reader, in which the reader will have to believe in the fantastic.

1.5.3 Why Moral Education in School?

Research about teaching moral values through the use of literature has been done by, among others, Natasa Pantic in her article “Moral education through Literature” (2006). Pantic’s article focuses on how literature has been used over time to teach moral values, and brings up different views concerning this (402). Literature was considered as a powerful tool for moral education during the Victorian era and continued to be highly valued during the twentieth century. But in modern times some critics have raised their voices against moral education

through literature. Pantic pays attention to three arguments against the use of literature for moral purposes or dilemmas as she puts it.

The first dilemma of moral education through literature that Pantic encountered is that cultural relativism can be seen as a hindrance and can make us permanently “bias[ed] towards other cultures” because our own culture is portrayed as the main culture and the right one. Critics argue that this cultural relativism is a hindrance for using literature to teach moral values. While this can be true in some instances, Pantic refutes this by firstly arguing that we must know our own culture to learn about others. Secondly, we can still learn from literature written in another culture and during another time period and thirdly, we do not become what we read (407-408). Literature will always mean different things to different cultures and to different individuals during different ages (409).

The second dilemma concerns the fact that moral education reduces literature to nothing more than lessons. Moral education removes their artistic value (409). However, in Pantic’s view it is too extreme to remove the moral implication of literature and some authors have written their works with a moral intention (410). There is a difference to the moral dimensions and the artistic value of literature, but it should not be a reason not to use literature in moral education (412).

The third and last dilemma is that ethics and moral values are complex subjects and it is difficult to transfer the moral dimensions of a book into classroom teaching. This gives the teacher a central role in interpreting the moral values in literature, when we want a student centred classroom environment. The teacher needs to be careful in the interpretation and let the students in when discussing moral values. Pantic recognises the complex nature of moral values, but on the other hand, she sees the opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas with the students. Many characters can serve as role-models for them and many books feature the struggle between good and bad (411). Much like real life, literature concerns how we live our lives, which in my opinion is why literature can be such a good source in moral education:

Moral dilemmas of most literary heroes are not between right and wrong, except perhaps in children’s moral tales. Most literature deals/with[sic] wrong/wrong or right/right kind of dilemmas. (Pantic 412)

I interpret this to mean that the moral dilemmas in the real world concern different actions that are either both right or both wrong. A chosen action can be the right thing to do, but feel morally wrong. Actions are not black or white, but we live in a grey shaded world.

Additionally there is a chapter in M.O Grenby's book *Children's Literature* about moral literature, where he writes about using literature for didactic purposes and the fusion of didacticism and realism. This is something that has been done for centuries. He brings up examples of books that "deal with ordinary children in ordinary situations with ordinary problems" (62). In his opinion, books that have a confessional mode add another layer for the reader to relate to. He also thinks that these children's books with a moral purpose show that "literature is not removed from real life" (66), something that can be applied to other genres as well.

Grenby deals with literature written for children and teenagers that is intended to be morally educative. But as Pantic notes, other works of literature can be used for this purpose as well. Even though Grenby has looked at books that belong to the genre of realism, the ordinary situations of ordinary people can be found in fantasy too.

To summarize, much research has been done in each respective area. Research also shows that there are many benefits as well as challenges that the teacher needs to be aware of in the classroom in order to make the most of literature in teachings, regardless if the purpose is moral education or some other pedagogical use for literature. Research shows that literature, the fantasy genre and moral education have a lot of potential for use in today's education.



2. New Spring in the Classroom

With the key concepts and research overview presented, we will now go on to apply these to an analysis of *New Spring* and the possibility to use it to teach about the fundamental values from the curriculum. Here we will look at the virtues in the novel, study other fundamental values, analyse the moral centre and also identify the issues that may arise. Throughout the analysis we will have to distinguish between what is morally right and wrong for different characters, the society they live in and what is right and wrong for us in our own world, because these are different things and will be highlighted in the course of the discussion.

To begin with, like many other fantasy novels *New Spring* is set in a feudal world, where democracy is a scarce commodity. The White Tower is ruled by the Hall of Tower, which consists of three sitters from each Ajah, the Amyrlin Seat and her Keeper of Chronicles. The sitters are chosen by their Ajah, and the Amyrlin is chosen by the sitters. But the world is mostly made up by kings and queens. Discussing a society that is not based on democracy will help us understand the value of democracy in our own society. This might seem like a paradox but opposites are good to use to highlight things we value in society.

Learning can be seen as a social process and has a focus on humans and their relations and interactions. Knowledge and different skills are something communicative and it is through interaction we can communicate knowledge like moral values. Therefore will this lesson have learning moments based on social interaction. Reading the text and working with it can be seen as a form of interaction as well (Dysthe¹ 43-44).

The lesson plan is divided into pre-, while-, and post-reading activities, just like Tricia Hedge recommends in her book *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom* (209).

2.1 Pre-reading activities

Before we start reading the book we will do the following the activities to help the students develop their reading skills, become critical readers and to help them become familiar with the context of the novel and the moral values.

We will start off this project by presenting the fundamental values from the curriculum and discuss how we can define them by first look at the definitions from the dictionary (see

section 2.1.1.). Here it is important to stress that the dictionary only offers one interpretation of each virtue. These activities are based on Hedge's suggestion to "raise interest for the topic" and to "activate their prior knowledge of the topic" (210).

As mentioned earlier the students will also be given a glossary as to not be discouraged if they are new to the genre. We cannot expect that every student is into fantasy, just as we cannot expect that they are fans of any other genre. This will also help them with becoming "oriented to the context of the text". We will also talk about their previous experience with fantasy (Hedge 210).

Hedge also mentions question the teacher can use in the classroom in the pre-reading stage that the students are supposed to ask themselves and answer (214). These questions are a part of my lesson plan and the students will spend one part of a lesson to answer them. The questions that will be used are:

Why am I reading this? What is my purpose? Why is it on my reading list?

What do I know about the author, the publisher, the circumstances of publication and the type of text? How do these affect my attitude towards and expectations on what I am about to read? Why?

What are my own views of the event(s) or topic before I start reading?

What other texts (written and spoken) on this or similar topics am I familiar with?

What are my views about them? (Hedge 214)

The lesson will also use questions for critical reading, to help the students look at the text critically and learn to use this skill with other texts. The nature of the questions makes it relevant to use them during all reading activities. They are introduced in the pre-reading stage to encourage the students to think about them from the beginning.

Why is the topic being written about?

How is the topic being written about?

What other ways of writing about the topic are there?

Who is the text's model reader? (Hedge 213)

2.1.1 Definitions of virtues and the fundamental values

These are the definitions from the dictionary and are my interpretations, but defining the moral values is also a part of the lesson plan. In order to engage the students and to clarify that the moral values can have different definitions depending to whom you are speaking with

each student will give their own definition. Every voice is important, and brings a new perspective. It can also be argued that each character in the book has a voice on how you can interpret the virtues (Dysthe² 311). Another way of defining the fundamental values is to talk about them as virtues, values we should strive to uphold.

Justice is the virtue of knowing the law and doing what is right. According to Merriam-Webster, justice is what is fair and just, and to know what is right by the law. It is also “the principle of just dealing” (“Justice”).

Generosity is to give freely of what you have, instead of keeping everything to yourself (Merriam-Webster “Generosity”). Even those who have little can be generous. Generosity also comes into function when discussing charity foundations, which also can be related to solidarity and empathy.

Solidarity means that we, as a group, look after each other both when it comes to interests and standards of living. The group can be the local community or as big as the global society (Merriam-Webster “Solidarity”). Solidarity is also a word often used in politics. Could the inclusion of it in the curriculum be a way of trying to depoliticise the word? Solidarity should not be a matter of ideology.

Empathy is the capability and action to understand and be sensitive to other people’s feelings, thoughts and experiences (Merriam-Webster “Empathy”). In a way, empathy is what makes us human and able to have social interaction. Lack of empathy is often equal to being cruel.

The act of tolerance is when you can sympathise with someone else’s beliefs even if they differ from your own (Merriam-Webster “Tolerance”), although I would rather speak of acceptance instead of tolerance. For me, to accept someone else despite our differences is a stronger action than to tolerate. In my view, tolerance is about the differences and acceptance is about what we have in common. The political scientist Wendy Brown also criticises the concept of tolerance and discusses this in her book *Regulating Aversion* (2006). One problem is that tolerance does not have the same meaning across nations and the meaning varies in different contexts even though everyone speaks of it (3). Another problem is that tolerance is about tolerating something about another person that I do not like or find disturbing (13). Not a bad thing in itself, it is part of being a good person, but when it comes to the fundamental values in the curriculum, we need to talk about acceptance instead.

To be accountable for one's actions and obligations is to show responsibility. I find it interesting that Merriam-Webster has the following definition for responsible, "able to choose for oneself between right and wrong", when it comes to the discussion of moral values that is all about right and wrong ("Responsible", "Responsibility"). It is important to take responsibility for one's actions. Responsibility is closely related to the concept of duty

I base the definition of gender equality on equality. That is, we all have the same value and equal rights no matter race, gender or beliefs. The equal value of all people is something that should pervade the whole society (Merriam-Webster "Equal").

Democratic values are not easy to find a definition of in the dictionary, but democracy is when the majority rules and when the people are in one way or another included in the decision-making (Merriam-Webster "Democracy"). I believe you could include freedom of speech, the right to vote and all these values above in the fundamental democratic values. The school is supposed to be democratic and the students need to be part of democratic society.

In a world where your neighbour and friend can be a Darkfriend, you need to be on the watch. This also means that the reader needs to read the book carefully. Critical thinking is of the essence here. You also need to be wary of what an Aes Sedai says. Even though she cannot lie, the author makes a point in the novel of how Aes Sedai twist words without lying. What they say is not always what they mean. This can become an issue in the classroom with all this deception that the students have to decode what an Aes Sedai says. But it can also help critical thinking, as mentioned earlier.

2.2 While-reading activities

To help the students become active readers I have prepared some while-reading activities, to encourage them as they read to be active and to think about what they are reading. Reading is not just for pleasure, but it can be a learning moment. The while-activities are also based on getting the students to reflect on what they are reading (Dysthe¹ 47).

The students will write down reactions to opinions and events after each chapter and also list their predictions for the coming chapter. This is to help them think about what they read and what events that could follow after what they just read. This is an ability that they will be better at the more they read and the more they practise it. This is also an exercise in following "the order of ideas in a text" (Hedge 210).

In order for the students to be prepared for post-reading activities they will also pick quotes or passages related to moral values from the text that will be useful for later discussion about moral values while they read *New Spring*. This way they will think about the moral values while they read and the post-reading activities will not come as a surprise.

The last while-reading activity is to continue with the questions for critical reading presented in the pre-reading section of this text.

2.3 Post-reading activities

After they have read the novel we need to tie it all together and foremost give them a conclusion to their critical reading of the novel. Ideally the post-reading activities will help the students check up on while-reading activities and “make use of what they have read in a meaningful way” (Hedge 211).

First of all we will discuss quotes and passages from the novel, those chosen by me as a teacher and those that the students have chosen while they read the novel. My quotes will serve as examples and a way into the discussions. This is a way to look at how the novel defines different moral values, how people act in different situations and to compare with situations from our world. The quotes chosen by me is presented in the section below (see section 2.3.1). By choosing their own quotes and passages and then discuss the moral values, I hope that they will make this new knowledge to their own and master it, which Olga Dysthe and Mari-Ann Igland call appropriation (my translation) (79).

Another post-reading activity we will do in the classroom is a classroom discussion in small groups around certain topics that will arise during the reading of the novel and the discussion of the quotes. The topics that will be discussed are:

- How is the law in *New Spring* different from our own?
- Could you say that the law in *New Spring* is more like our legal system was in the Middle Ages?
- Penances in a teaching and working environment?
- Should we have tougher sentences in our society?
- Who decides who is in need of help?
- Can you truly do something for another without benefitting from it yourself, i.e. there is a reward in being nice?
- How does empathy relate to humanity?

- Are stereotypes in novels useful?
- How can we show more tolerance in a society with steadily less clear borders?
- Does our society focus as much on duty as they do in *New Spring*?
- Do you agree that physical labour builds character?
- Is everyone equal in our society?
- Why do you think black and dark are often used to connote negative things?
- Democratic values versus feudalism? Can a feudal society be truly equal?
- Could the feudal society in *New Spring* evolve to a democratic one?
- Why is the feudal society a popular setting for fantasy novels?

There will also be an exercise about analysing the characters in order to get a new perspective on one's own morality. This will be discussed further in the section called 2.3.2 Characterisation. This exercise is connected to the exercise about moral justification, which will also be about analysing the characters and their actions, see 2.3.3 Moral justification.

The last post-reading activity is to finish the question about critical reading and self-evaluate their critical reading skills, the last exercise that will tie it all together. The evaluation will be based on the students own reflection on their abilities regarding critical reading (Hedge 211).

2.3.1 Portrayals of the moral values

Here are the quotes and passages I have chosen to use in the classroom. Besides presenting them I will also problematize them.

Justice

"You had no right to let them go," she said indignantly, anger flashing in her eyes as she did her best to skewer each of them with her gaze. She reined her mare around to make sure they each received a dose. 'Had they attacked, I could have used the One Power against them. How many people have they robbed and murdered, how many women ravished, how many children orphaned. We should have fought them and taken the survivors to the nearest magistrate.'"(Jordan 285)

In some cases you have to balance your own life against doing the right thing, like Lan does here. But as readers we are shown what justice should be like when it comes to bandits on the road. You could also relate this incident to civil courage and if you as a civilian should intervene when someone else is assaulted, risking your own life to help another.

Justice is also depicted through different references to legal justice. This gives the reader a sense of what the law is like in *New Spring*. Here are two examples of legal justice that give us a chance to compare with our own laws:

He had attempted murder, but she had not intended to hold him up as a target for execution. He *would* have been executed, once they had carried him to a magistrate, yet she disliked having been part of carrying out the sentence, especially before it was given. (Jordan 289)

“The penalty for horse-theft is flogging if the horse is recovered and worse if not.” (Jordan 311)

Justice is also done when penance is inflicted on those that break the Tower law and custom, mostly by novices and Accepted. Penance is used to enforce certain behaviour, something that can be discussed if it is useful.

Three sisters were exiled from Tar Valon for a year, and twice Moiraine was forced to join the others in the Traitor’s Court to watch an Aes Sedai stripped and stretched tight on the triangle, then birched till she howled. (Jordan 206)

In this example it is hard to know what justice is done for. If we do not know the crime, can we know that justice has been done or if it actually required penance?

The novel shows the importance of justice and of obeying the different laws that exist. Something that is fundamental for a society to function. Laws bring order, but as we have noticed earlier laws do not always represent moral values. Laws are not always just.

Empathy, Generosity, Solidarity

“In thanksgiving for the continued safety of Tar Valon [...] I have decided the Tower will give a bounty of one hundred crowns to every woman in the city who bore a child between the day the first soldiers arrived and the day the threat is ended. [...] Since the army provided the shield to Tar Valon, I have decided to extend the bounty to those women also.” (Jordan 52)

The Tower shows good will and solidarity when handing out money, even though the Tower has a secret motive. Can it be an act of solidarity when you do it with an agenda or is it enough that the world thinks you are acting in solidarity?

According to Moiraine it is important for nobles and rulers of nation to show solidarity for the less fortunate. “Noble blood carried as many responsibilities as rights!” (Jordan 79). It is their responsibility to look after these people, since they have more to give from. But

apparently not all nobles see it this way. In this quote solidarity and responsibility coincide. It is the noble blood's responsibility to show solidarity.

Moiraine shows empathy and generosity while being out in the camps collecting names of the newborns.

At Susa's nod, she took her purse from her belt pouch and pressed a silver penny into the woman's free hand. [...] "With the bounty to come," Suan whispered once Susa had finally gone, "the Wise Woman would have given credit". (Jordan 80)

Perhaps it is even more generous to do it when you do not have to do it. There is a personal reward in being nice, and it feels good to know that you have done something good for someone else. Being nice is also something that gives you a higher social status.

Tolerance

This is one of the harder virtues to find explicitly in the novel. On the one hand, people from different nations and cultures are stereotyped, but on the other they get along fine in larger cities, where cultures mix. In *New Spring* there is a whole passage on how people from different cultures and nations dress and act (Jordan 64).

Responsibility

This is something that is expressed in how the characters are constructed. But responsibility is also expressed through doing chores in the Tower, which is one way they teach the novices, hard work builds character.

An Accepted who put her feet too far wrong might find herself clearing away snow with a shovel – the sisters were great believers that physical labor built character – but no one had gotten into that much trouble lately. (Jordan 36)

There is also a need for responsibility when dealing with the Power. With great power comes great responsibility.

Part of her wished she could hold *saidar* every waking moment, but that was strictly prohibited. That desire could lead to drawing more and more, until eventually you drew more than you could handle. And that either killed you, or else burned the ability to channel out of you. Losing this ... bliss ... would be much worse than death. (Jordan 40)

Gender equality and Equal value

Equality is portrayed in the novel in several ways. One way it is expressed is through the office of the Amyrlin. She who holds the office as the Amyrlin Seat is of all Ajah and none.

No matter which Ajah she was raised from. Even though she has an office of power, and rules over the other Aes Sedai, she should not give favours to any Ajah and should treat every Aes Sedai the same way. But in another way the Amyrlin is not a symbol of equality as she has a high social rank, a lot of power and is almost like a queen to the Aes Sedai. The Amyrlin Seat is an ambiguous position.

Equal value can also be discussed regarding the fact that outside rank does not matter inside the Tower. The Aes Sedai have their own hierarchies, in which the amount of ability in the Power gives status instead of wealth and noble blood. This means that the Aes Sedai are equal in class, but are not truly equal in the Power. But I would say that it is only natural that your ability in the Power decides your status within the community, just as other occupations have their hierarchies depending on skill. But you can also argue that the amount of ability in the Power is something you are born with, and therefore not something you can affect and it is still unequal. Noble rank is also something you are born with.

“If another sister stands higher than you in the Power, whatever her Ajah, you must defer to her. The higher she stands above you, the greater your deference.” (Jordan 173)

Of course, rank outside would carry no rights inside the Tower. There had been two daughters of beggars who rose to Amyrlin Seat, as well as daughters of merchants and farmers and craftsfolk, including three daughters of cobblers, but only one daughter of a ruler. (Jordan 33)

The Aes Sedai stand high in the outside hierarchy, even though class outside the Tower does not matter inside the Tower. Inside the tower all that matters is your ability with the power. But outside the Tower economic conditions and if you are of noble blood make a difference. This can become a learning moment by that there are different kinds of equality. The students can learn by analysing what gives status in a given situation. Status can be based on many different things and equality can exist in one situation but not in another.

There is also the matter of equality between men and women. The Aes Sedai are powerful and influential women in this world. In many ways, Moiraine is a female role model. She is a strong female, although she has her flaws, and not all fantasy books have this, as mentioned in the introduction. Among the rulers of the different countries, female rulers are as common as male rulers. However, there is a clear division between men and women in the novel as well. We have the relation between an Aes Sedai and her Warder. The warder is almost always a male and in one way they complete each other but in other ways he is subordinate to her.

[...] the two Warders, who were heeling her like hunting hounds. (Jordan 118)

[...]he sank to his knees, the sword lying bare across his hands. "By my mother's name, I will draw as you say 'draw' and sheathe as you say 'sheathe'. By my mother's name, I will come as you say 'come' and go as you say 'go'." He kissed the blade and looked up at her expectantly. (Jordan 358)

In these quotes the Warders are shown as being followers of the Aes Sedai and that they submit to the Aes Sedai they are bonded to.

Is there an issue of the use of the words Dark One, Darkfriend and Black Ajah? I, myself, have always connected this to the shadows and that we do not always know what lures in the dark where we cannot see. But when you look at it through critical eyes you could as easily make the connection to skin colour. You can also question why black and dark are often used to connote negative things.

Democratic values

As mentioned in the beginning, the novel is set in a feudal world with few democratic instances. Even though there are some elections made with on a democratic basis. But the right to vote is not granted to everyone, much like how democracy started out for us. This is something that will be discussed in the classroom.

Critical thinking

In a world where your neighbour and friend can be a Darkfriend, you need to be on the watch. This also means that the reader needs to read the book carefully. Critical thinking is of the essence here. You also need to be wary of what an Aes Sedai says. Even though she cannot lie, the author makes a point in the novel of how Aes Sedai twist words without lying. What they say is not always what they mean. This can become an issue in the classroom with all this deception, that the students have to decode what an Aes Sedai says. But it can also help critical thinking, as mentioned earlier.

The woman *was* Black Ajah; she was certain of that, now. Sisters might make painful examples of people caught snooping around, but they did not kill them. But what to do about her? Certainty was not proof, surely no proof that would stand up before the Amyrlin Seat. (Jordan 346)

Moiraine shows here that she needs to have proof for what she believes, which is something that is present not only in school but in our society as well. You have to base your assumptions on evidence.

But you also need to think critically when it comes to the writer's opinions. We do not know what he wants to show by writing this novel and it is only through critical eyes we can become aware of different structures in the novel and in the society (Hedge 199).

2.3.2 Characterisation

By picking the characters apart students can look at themselves and understand what virtues drive them. This will anchor the virtues within the students and also help them understand these virtues.

One thing we need to take in consideration when it comes to characterisation is point of view. Because the point of the view in the novel is from of one of the main characters, the reader knows their inner thoughts and can judge their actions accordingly. But in contrast to the main characters the other characters seem more simple-minded. However, there are some points to consider, when it comes point of view. We are only presented with Moiraine's and Lan's perspective of the world and their opinion of what happens. This perspective is called a third-person limited narrator (Griffith 37). This is also a reason to be critical of the world that is presented to us, as Griffith mentions, "these characters may distort what they tell us and observe" (39).

This is also a matter of "taking the perspective of another", we all see the world differently and by taking the perspective of the characters we see their world from their own eyes. But it is also an exercise to be able to take the perspective of another person in the real world. Furthermore, taking another perspective is about estimate someone or something in relation to oneself (Vaage 126-128).

2.3.3 Moral justification

A question that arises is how do the characters justify their actions that go against moral values? Let us look at some of the things the characters say and think to justify their actions, and as said previously the justification in itself does not make the action good, but it makes a difference for the individual (Driver 14):

" 'You must know the rules to the letter' ", she quoted, " 'and live with them before you can know which rules to break and when' [...]". (Jordan 38)

[I]t was easier to ask forgiveness than permission. (Jordan 105)

All the anger she had tamped down flared up. The man threw her into an icy pond, he did not apologize, he ...! (Jordan 270)

“Gold. Why else?”(Jordan 290)

These show that you can justify ‘morally wrong’ actions differently. But we can ask ourselves this: Are these legit ways of justify one’s actions? How would the students react in a similar situation? Who decides if the action is justifiable?



3. Conclusions

To conclude, this is just one way you can plan your lesson to bring the fundamental values of the curriculum into your education. This is how I will use *New Spring* in the classroom; however the lesson plan can be used for other novels as well. If we look closer on fantasy novels we can see that they can be useful for talking about topics that concern us in our own society, like moral values. There is usually a set of moral values that the fantasy world relies upon, or we can use the differences and opposites as learning moments. I would say that fantasy novels are as good as other genres to use in educational purposes.

However, I strongly believe that we need to work on talking about the fundamental values everyday in school. If we lay the basis for an understanding of fundamental values in school, students will hopefully bring these virtues with them and contribute to a better society built on justice, responsibility, generosity, tolerance, empathy, solidarity, all humans equal value, critical thinking and democracy.

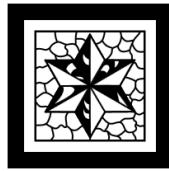


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All images used are chapter icons from *New Spring*.



Appendix 1

Glossary

Aes Sedai: a sisterhood of women who can wield, or channel, the One Power that have trained in the White Tower. They enroll as novices, after years of training they can test to become Accepted and after further years of training a woman can test to become Aes Sedai, a sister of the White Tower (Jordan and Patterson 214).

Ajah: different societies within the Aes Sedai. There are seven of them; Red, Green, Gray, Brown, Yellow, Blue and White. Each Ajah has its own goals and focus. You choose your Ajah when you become Aes Sedai. There is also an eight, unofficial and secret, Ajah, the Black which consists of sisters sworn to the Dark One (Jordan and Patterson 219).

Amyrlin Seat: The ruler of the Aes Sedai, and the ruler with the most power in the Land. She rules over the Hall and is the supreme head of the Tower (Jordan and Patterson 218).

Darkfriend: People lured by the promises from the Dark One of power and immortality. They have sworn themselves to the Dark One. Anyone can be a Darkfriend (Jordan and Patterson 69-70)

The Dark One: A dark and evil presence that touch the physical world and intends to break free from his prison, which is when the Last Battle is bound to happen (Jordan and Patterson 48).

The Dragon Reborn: a man able to channel who is prophesised to save the world in the Last Battle against the Shadow and the Dark One. The Prophecies of the Dragon state that he is the saviour and the destroyer, but also that he is the last hope for the world in *New Spring* and *The Wheel of Time*-series (Jordan and Patterson 293).

The One Power: the magic in *New Spring* and it is channeled. Both men and women can use the Power, but men grow mad and are usually hunted down to protect themselves and others. Also called the True Source. The female half is called *saidar* and the male half is called *saidin* (Jordan and Patterson 17).

Shadowspawn: creatures used by the Dark One to fight for him and they are like “creatures out of a nightmare” (Jordan and Patterson 72). Shadowspawn can be roughly humanlike and there are many different kinds (Jordan and Patterson 72).

Tar Valon: The city of Tar Valon is where the White Tower lies and the city is governed by the Aes Sedai.

Warder: usually a man that has been bonded with the One Power to an Aes Sedai. In many ways he is a warrior and the bond grants him quick healing, sense the emotions of his Aes Sedai and where she is. The Aes Sedai can sense the emotions of her Warder. This includes that they both can sense the death of the other one (Jordan and Patterson 215).